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Something More Beautiful: Educational and Epistemic Integrations Beyond Inequities in Muslim-minority Contexts

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Abstract

Purpose – Islamic schools in Western secular societies are evolving in response to collective concerns over marginalization of Muslim children and communities and to increasing demands for high-quality education in the faith tradition. These schools are at the center of public debate over how they fit within secular societies. This paper aims to take a pedagogic look at the literature in the field of Islamic Education Studies.

Design/methodology/approach – Engaging in a collaborative thematic analytic review of this literature, in an educational hermeneutic approach, two novel themes are discerned as features of Muslim learners' diverse educational landscapes.

Findings – The first theme, Dual Consciousness recognizes that young Muslims live parallel lives, moving between secular and faith-based schools and communities, and suggesting potential in developing cognitive flexibility across epistemic horizons. The second theme, Educational Transferables is a coalescence of abilities that young Muslims develop within sites of Islamic education, which may enhance their engagement in secular schools and societies.

Social implications – In highlighting possibilities for young people's educational well-being in both secular and Islamic schools, with significant pedagogical implications for both, the themes featured in this paper suggest that Muslim learners' complex educational experiences make varied contributions to heterogeneous societies.

Originality/value – Despite ongoing forces of marginalization, expressions of Islamic education have benefits for young Muslims negotiating complex sociocultural and educational worlds. In highlighting possibilities for young people's educational well-being in both secular and Islamic schools, with significant pedagogical implications for both, these themes suggest that Muslim educators can nurture in young people the ability for complex, conceptual integration in contribution to heterogeneous societies.

Keywords Muslim learners, Islamic education, Pedagogy, Social justice, Minority culture, Spiritual development

Paper type Conceptual paper

1. An educational intersection

Learners who are members of both Muslim-minority communities and secular-dominant, liberal societies, like those of North America, Europe and Australia, experience educational diversities as assets and diversities of discrimination as constraints. Spiritual development is far from fostered in most public schools; simultaneously, the Islamic schools where

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Muslim youth seek spiritual development are often denigrated in the secular public eye (Berglund, 2019a). These schools are often included at the center of public debate over whether and how Muslim citizenship is expressed and optimized (Berglund, 2019b). The focus of this paper is confessional Islamic education for children and youth, as distinct from other varieties, and can be understood as: "efforts by the Muslim community to educate its own, to pass along the heritage of Islamic knowledge, first and foremost through its primary sources, the Qur'an and the Sunnah" (Douglass and Shaikh, 2004, p. 4). Primary goals of this type of Islamic education are motivated by faith-informed senses of responsibility in seeking knowledge and self-development – "not merely to satisfy an intellectual curiosity or just for material worldly benefit but to grow up as rational, righteous beings" (Ashraf, 1979, as quoted in Halstead, 2004, p. 519) – and include enacted spiritual, moral, intellectual and social development of individuals, communities and societies. This type of education in the Islamic tradition is, for many people, a highly valued form of education (Ahmed, 2021; Berglund, 2019b; Memon, 2019), yet it has been stunted by educational aspects of colonization and an ongoing lack of appreciation for its importance. This has resulted in educational research and practice falling short of serving Muslim learners and, as a neglected field, has resulted in policies and practices that "often fail to achieve intended aims" (Shah, 2019, p. 351). More research is needed at the intersection of Islamic and secular educational communities for young Muslims' well-being in both.

This conceptual paper contributes to this intersection in reporting upon a collaborative review of the interdisciplinary field of Islamic Education Studies (Sahin, 2018). The review was motivated by a multifaceted problem involving the still-emerging nature of the field and controversy over Islamic education, including its purposes, pedagogies and places in secular Western societies. Through thematic analysis of the literature, we constructed themes that we discuss here as contributions toward understanding educational realities for young Muslim learners in culturally heterogeneous Western societies and pedagogical implications. As researchers and educators, each of the four authors is positioned within this intersection between Muslim-minority and secular-dominant contexts, in Canada, Australia and Ireland. Our positioning constitutes a contextual lens on our collective review. We start by acknowledging the precedents that other minority educational communities and generations of indigenous scholars have established in countering and building parallel to the mainstream, striving toward more expansive expressions of education (e.g. Bang, 2020; Kelly and Rigney, 2021), including in making visible clear links between ontology, epistemology and pedagogy. In providing discursive context for understanding the development of Islamic Education, the paper engages with a larger phenomenon in the academy, as well as schools and societies: the lack of serious engagement with educational cultures, philosophies and practices outside Western, Eurocentric academic expressions (Sahin, 2018).

2. Tentative definitions

A faith-centered paradigm frames this type of Islamic education centering a divine reality, *tawhid*, as unity of "the divine, revelation, creation, truth, and humanity" (Safi, 1999, p. 8), encompassing diversity across spiritual and secular articulations of life and education. Many Muslims consider innate recognition of this divine oneness as a deeply embedded aspect of human nature (Ahmed, 2021). These paradigmatic perspectives differ from dominant, Western, secular ones and so this paper is an offering toward epistemic diversity. We accept and build upon Sahin's (2018) definition of Islamic Education Studies as:

> An inclusive expression indicating the scholarly engagement and knowledge production conducted by Muslim and non-Muslims alike in describing and critiquing what counts as education and educational values and thought within the Islamic tradition (p. 342).

We suggest defining Islamic Education (both words capitalized) as a distinct, albeit emerging and interdisciplinary, academic field, composed of internally competing definitions and conceptions and contextualized by interpretational and cultural diversity over people, time and place. We envision this field as including both education in the Islamic faith tradition and the ideational blending of secular and spiritual into a holistic (*tawḥīdi)* educational approach (Ahmed, 2019; Zaman, 2016). Literature in the field encompasses a growing number of scholars, educators and practitioners exploring Islamic faith development through education within larger pluralistic societies; calling for renewals of Islamic schools in alignment with more deeply rooted Islamic philosophies for education (Abdalla *et al.*, 2018; Ahmed, 2019; Memon, 2021); exploring new pedagogies toward unique educational objectives; and teaching back to systematic Islamophobia (Alkouatli, 2022a).

We use the term Islamic education (lowercase) to refer to the varied, formal and informal, processes of teaching and learning Islam as a faith tradition. Within this confessional type of Islamic education, its expressions run a wide spectrum from instrumental learning of religious practices and etiquettes, to esoteric methods of character refinement and spiritual transformation, differing significantly from secular expressions of education at ontic and epistemic levels (Alkouatli, 2022b). Its holism can be evidenced, for example, in Al-Fartousi (2016) study with ten Shi'i Muslim–Canadian public school students:

> [S]pirituality is manifested through their religious commitment, their body through their adherence to the cultural and religious rules corresponding to their interaction with the opposite gender, and their mind through their understanding of the meaning of their religious values, particularly the abstract meanings (p. 221).

The distinct, expansive nature of Islamic education is evidenced here with reference to the spiritual, physical, cultural and intellectual. While expressions of Islamic education are varied, so too is the literature on its aspects, which together constitute an embrace of complexity and contestation regarding the term "Islamic education." The worldview framing Islamic education, within which people live, teach, learn and research, is simultaneously unified in principle and diverse in expression.

3. Educational hermeneutic methodology

This paper is the result of a collaborative thematic analytic review of recent literature situated within Islamic Education Studies. We focused upon a specific portion of literature on Islamic education in English that pertains to the education of Muslim children and youth in the Islamic faith within minoritized Muslim communities situated within secular Westernized majorities. Our methodological approach was an educational hermeneutic one (Sahin, 2018) shaped by a primary research question:

> *RQ1.* What themes are at the theoretical and empirical forefronts of the emerging field of Islamic Education Studies?

Which established inclusion criteria of the literature we reviewed: conceptual and empirical research in English, published within the last ten years, on educating Muslim children and youth within the tradition of Islam, in Muslim-minority communities in secular-liberal Western majorities. The term "forefront" refers to *recent* educational discussions. Delimiting publications to within the last ten years aimed to move beyond discussions in the literature archive that, although important, have already been had, toward topics that are nascent, urgent and emerging. From here, we took three methodological steps.

3.1 Step 1. Collecting the literature

Starting with a key-term search in Scopus and Google Scholar [1], and sorting for the most cited, as is conventional in systematic literature reviews (Farooqui and Kaushik, 2022), we supplemented these titles with a subjective expansion that included identifying scholars who were influential in the field. We then refined our analytic focus to people whose work was currently leading the field, thus centering the human being at the center of a body of work, as defined by four criteria: scholars who specifically focused on aspects of education in the Islamic tradition; scholars who identified Islamic Education as an emerging and interdisciplinary field and located themselves and their work primarily within this field, as evidenced by a clear research role or mandate; scholars who evidenced and extended their work with a practical, social dimension, including, for example, establishing a center, teacher education program, school or community program; and scholars who had an active publishing records of at least three conceptual and/or empirical studies on Islamic Education specifically, in English-language, peer-reviewed journals and/or co-edited books in the last ten years.

3.2 Step 2. Individual and collective thematic analysis

After collecting the literature, the next step was collaborative construction of a rubric for a consistent analytic thematic reading, including questions like:

Q1. What topics do the papers focus on?

Q2. What are the theoretical lenses?

Q3. Methodological approaches?

Q4. Which other scholars influence the work?

These aspects of the rubric were sensitizing concepts in our thematic analyses of the literature as a data corpus. We each conducted an individual thematic analysis on the literature, annotating the rubric and assembling a thematic-analytic report, which we shared with each other. Next, we engaged in collective thematic analysis. Each other's annotated rubrics and thematic-analytic reports became a new source of raw data, which we examined for shared, significant and divergent themes that we proposed as *candidate themes*.

3.3 Step 3. Determining the final themes

The differing experiences of the four analysts constituted varied lenses through which we viewed the data. While this brought invigorated heterogeneity to our analyses, we needed clear criteria to guide justification of our *final themes*. We agreed upon four criteria by which we could determine whether a candidate theme constituted a final theme, as a forefront of the field:

- Specificity: the theme must be specific to an aspect of Islamic Education Studies and relevant within that disciplinary context.
- Novelty: the theme must be a new area, issue or insight – or a *new iteration* of an older area, issue or insight – ideally, generated within empirical research.
- Urgency: the theme must identify an immediate need for further exploration, which, if not addressed, could impact upon participants or aspects of Islamic education.
- Iteracy: while the theme need not be included in all of our analytic reports, it could not only be mentioned in one. Echoes of the theme must be clearly discernable across the field's literature.

Our collective analysis generated five themes, two of which specifically involve epistemic heterogeneity as conceptual backdrop to young Muslims' educational landscapes and are reported in this paper. The three remaining themes – Intra-Community Diversity, Islamic Pedagogies and Gender in Islamic Education, as pragmatic dimensions of contemporary Islamic education – are discussed in Alkouatli, Memon, Sai and Chown (forthcoming).

4. Ontoepistemic integrations in two themes

The first theme, *Dual Consciousness*, is described as young people living parallel lives, "with one lifestyle and identity at home and in madrasah and another at state-funded schools" (Ahmed, 2019, p. 647), which is also understood as a "felt dual alienation" (Panjwani, 2017, p. 603). The second theme, *Educational Transferables*, is a coalescence of abilities that young Muslims develop within sites of Islamic education that can enhance their experiences in secular societies, including academic skills (Berglund, 2019a), aspects of character development (Ahmed, 2019) and pedagogies for development (Alkouatli, 2022a). Multiple scholars have identified these transferables as originating within sites of Islamic education and having benefit for (Muslim and maybe also non-Muslim) learners in sites of public secular education. Both themes illuminate richness at the levels of ontology and epistemology; both have implications for education. Taken together, the two themes paint a picture of mutual contribution and conceptual integration, important for understanding contextual complexities of teaching, learning and developing with, and as, young Muslims.

4.1 Dual consciousness

The presence of a variably experienced *Dual Consciousness* was widely described across the literature reviewed here. In a study on Canadian Muslim educators' pedagogies (Alkouatli, 2022a), educators described Muslim youth as "stuck between two worlds," and as moving between multiple worlds, as this dialogue between two educators attests:

> Fatima: My girl, she's 12 years, sometimes she tells me, "Mom, sometimes I feel like I live in different countries in one day! Like when I go home, this is a country. When I go to school, this is a country. When I go to the beach [. . .]" [laughing].
>
> Huda: That's a different country! [laughing].

This excerpt describes a girl negotiating different "countries" within Canada rooted in differing ontoepistemic paradigms and expressed in differing lifestyles, social practices and identities. This girl's point about the beach, and Huda's assertation that the beach is itself a different country, is connected to a deeper sociospiritual concept called *hayya* (modesty), which is centrally positioned within Islamic tradition. This excerpt illustrates that the worlds through which the girl moves are populated by crystalized concepts that require identification and negotiation as part of the everyday education of existing as a conceptual minority.

Dual Consciousness development is described in very different ways, within the Islamic Education literature, illustrating its complexity. (The ways in which it is experienced in other minority educational communities is beyond the scope of this paper.) It is evidenced in the ways in which schools in Europe teach about religion in general and Islam in particular – confessional and secular approaches – with discussion ongoing as to which produces more socially coherent citizens (Berglund, 2019b). Panjwani (2017) critically described a "felt double alienation" (p. 603), based upon a perception of alterity between dominant English and minority home cultures and often expressed as a problematic amplification of Muslim religious identity into *Muslimness*, as a publicly enacted phenomenon and an "Islamic allegiance beyond race and ethnicity" (p. 603), whereby "the diversity of identity-attributes is compressed to a religious

attribute (religification) and the religious differences are denied to create a single homogenised Muslim (essentialism)" (p. 604). He described that confessional Islamic education has been instrumental in developing this religification of Muslims at the expense of other identities. Shah (2019) also described *Muslimness* as problematic, but primarily in its potential to further marginalize the young people who claim this identity designation, in setting up a polarized "suspect community and the racist state" (p. 349). For example, British-born Muslims suffer educationally, emotionally and socially who do not feel belonging to their parents' or grandparents' countries of origin yet simultaneously "experience rejection in the country of their own birth and citizenship" (p. 352).

This positioning of a "suspect community" has a history. Shah (2006) described young Muslims' identity constructions developing against a contextual backdrop of "historical/political legacies such as the Muslims in Spain/Jerusalem, the crusades, the Western Imperialism, the Al-Qaeda factor, and 9/11" (p. 220). Sahin (2013), too, noted historical foundations: "[T]he challenges facing the British and European Muslim diaspora largely reflect crises that have defined much older Muslim communities worldwide" (p. 204). Translated into today's educational contexts, this history affords differential value to different ontologies and epistemologies. Unequal power relations between ontoepistemologies have contributed to the perception that Islamic education is intellectually inferior to education rooted in secular-dominant frames. These historical and systemic/structural features chime with contemporary descriptions of anti-Muslim racism (Rana *et al.*, 2020), sharpening the challenge of maintaining Islamic continuity between spiritual–religious home and community lives and secular public schooling.

Another example of differing educational valence is evidenced in pedagogies of learning the Qur'an, central to Islamic education. On one side of Dual Consciousness, many Muslim educators, learners and parents value high-quality recitation and memorization of the Qur'an, including as a unique literacy and in generation of "emotional power" (Gent and Muhammad, 2019, p. 427) with significant social capital (Berglund, 2019a). One of her 18-year-old research participants recalled: "If I remember to quote the Qur'an when I visit my grandmother, she is always very pleased, as pleased, or more pleased than if I have succeeded on a test in school" (p. 21). On the other side of Dual Consciousness, however, in the context of secular public schooling, the value of memorizing the Qur'an is often seen by mainstream educators as starkly different from modern, Western educational approaches and "not a very good idea" (p. 22). At best, the pedagogical practice holds minimal educational value; at worst, it is considered a type of indoctrination. Berglund (2019a) summarized implications on Muslim learners: "[P]ositive outcomes will continue to elude Muslim students so long as their mainstream teachers lack basic curiosity or are negatively disposed toward their students' supplementary Islamic education" (p. 22).

This consecutive marginalization – whereby spectrums of Muslim onto-epistemologies are marginalized in secular public schools and expressions of Islamic education are marginalized by secular-dominant ones – is a central aspect of Dual Consciousness. Muslim children of minority-Muslim sects are even further marginalized (Al-Fartousi, 2016; Merchant, 2016).

Increasingly, however, scholars are asserting that secular and religious identities can be multiple (Panjwani, 2017); they can also be integrated (Alkouatli, 2022a; Sahin, 2018). In degrees of creative complexity, educators who themselves recognize the existence of these different paradigms, make them visible with learners, and point out their differing ontoepistemic features and intellectual and emotional valences, may be able to role model cross-paradigmatic thinking and help learners navigate between paradigms. The educators in Alkouatli's (2022a) study described that being able to think creatively across paradigms is an ability that young Muslims need for participation in Canadian cultural life. Considering

Muslim educators' pedagogies and practices as "counter-creative acts" (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, p. 10) – which challenge Eurocentric, secular, epistemic hegemony by their ongoing and transformative use in sites of Islamic Education – make visible particular forms of being, learning and developing (Alkouatli, 2022a). The ability to think across paradigms and to offer one's own epistemic perspectives may be counterhegemonic ways of contributing to epistemic expansion for community development itself.

Recognition of Dual Consciousness is contextually significant to young Muslims' development and that of Islamic Education as a field; it is situated at the intersection of entrenched Islamophobia, threats of Muslim extremism *and* desires of many members of Muslim communities for sociocultural–spiritual sustainability through religious education.

4.2 Educational transferables

While the first theme has been mentioned as a deficit in Muslim educational communities at least since colonization of Muslim-majority countries two centuries ago, it has not been analyzed as a potential educational asset until recently. The second theme, Educational Transferables, is more recent, developing as Muslim educational communities have themselves developed within secular, Western ones. We draw this term from Berglund and Gent's (2018) study, one of the first to identify positive contributions of Islamic education upon secular systems. Aware of the word's resonances of neoliberal discourses of productivity, we hope to reclaim it and repopulate its meanings. Defined as a coalescence of valuable skills, competencies, pedagogies and aspects of character that young Muslims develop within sites of Islamic education that may contribute to their successful functioning in secular schools and societies, Educational Transferables paint a picture of interaction and mutual contribution.

As a sequel to Dual Consciousness, this second theme begins by recognizing that there are distinct streams of schooling, based on differing ontological foundations, within which many Muslim children participate. In Muslim-majority societies, for example, Sahin (2013) identified "international" secular schools and Islamic schools as "two contrasting educational systems," which "run parallel to one another" (p. 3). Nasr (2012) identified a similar phenomenon echoed in many Muslim-minority communities in terms of secular public and Islamic schools, which create a social, intellectual and spiritual schism. Most literature to date has focused on this schism and on highlighting public education's benefits for Muslim learners. Yet, each type of schooling has unique benefits and challenges and, as Muslim communities mature in secular Western societies, Islamic educational systems evolve shaping participants who are increasingly positioned for social contribution and leadership. For example, as Shah (2006) noted: "The new generation of British-born Muslims, in particular, sees itself as equal partners in national membership–not marginalized immigrants" (p. 231). Recent research is increasingly identifying educational benefits of Islamic education for Muslim learners embedded within secular societies, which we explore here in four cross-over effects: skills and competencies; character development; pedagogies; and integrated identity development.

The first educational transferable includes educational skills and competencies that Muslim learners pursue within sites of Islamic education. For example, Muslim learners described how memorizing the Qur'an in their Islamic schools contributed to their ability to focus and memorize in their public schools (Berglund and Gent, 2018). Expanded memory is related to other benefits such as self-confidence and the ability to listen thoughtfully. Berglund (2019a) suggested that learning the Qur'an may be complementary to learning applied subjects, like mathematics or science – where memorization and meaningful application is required. In addition to memory development, research participants described enhanced visualization and commitment to learning. Implicit benefits may include the "development of patience, tolerance,

perseverance, and humility; the habit of being precise; being well-organised" (Gent and Muhammad, 2019, p. 435). In a study conducted across three Muslim-majority countries, Boyle (2006) described memorization of the Qur'an as a process of embodiment:

> [S]tudents embody or possess the words of God within their very beings, where they can physically reproduce it, share it, and refer to it, ideally over the course of their lifetimes (p. 491).

She described this as enabling a learner to develop an overarching sense of spiritual well-being, including in facing hardships, disappointments; fostering inner security and identity; and recognizing one's own value as a human being: "The embodied Qur'an provides a source of guidance–a moral compass–for the memorizer" (p. 494).

Memorized verses of the Qur'an as constituting a person's inner moral compass leads to a second transferable: character development. The refinement of character is a central purpose of Islamic practices and therefore central in many sites of Islamic education. An independent Islamic school in the UK uses methods of character development including cultivating close school–family relationships; small class sizes to enable teacher–child relationships; teachers remaining with a class of children for at least two years, as mentors and role models; and *halaqah* (a dialogic circle time) used as a daily pedagogy for joint meaning-making (Ahmed, 2019). Toward cognitive, social-emotional and character development, these methods contribute toward the aim of developing *shakhsiyah Islamiyah*, as a unique form of personal development that includes identity and autonomy. Here, a young Muslim's identity is established in supportive, dialogic community – and cognizance of the different cultural and educational worlds in which young Muslims learn and develop – and may contribute to an individual's engaged participation in UK public life (Ahmed, 2019).

A third transferable includes both Muslim educators and learners as participants in transformative *pedagogical* approaches that may have implications for social functioning in heterogeneous communities. In considering pedagogy within a broad, philosophical perspective, Memon (2021) identified three priorities of Islamic pedagogy: first, Islamic pedagogy deepens ontological consciousness; second, Islamic pedagogy is dialogical; and third, Islamic pedagogy is ethical and justice oriented. The second priority chimes with previous research describing Islamic pedagogy as dialogic and relational between educator and learner: mediated, active and engaged (Ahmed, 2019; Alkouatli, 2018). The third priority encompasses research on justice as an Islamic imperative and Waghid (2014) identified a spectrum of minimal and maximal Islamic educational expressions, which contributes toward minimizing, or eradicating, unjust acts against humanity. In other words, expressions of Islamic education that function on the maximal end of the spectrum hold potential in contributing to a more just society for *all* citizens. Within a broad ethical lens, pedagogy is seen as supportive of learners' identity development, as it takes place across multiple nuanced contexts of interpretation, culture, race, ethnicity, nation, gender and generation (Memon, 2019). Others have situated learner uniqueness at the center of pedagogic encounters, drawing inspiration from the earliest Prophetic pedagogies (Sahin, 2013).

While these aspects may be common to pedagogical understandings in other epistemic and educational contexts, including secular, public ones, Memon's (2021) first priority distinctly identifies a pedagogical objective that is unique to Islamic education: awakening and deepening a consciousness (Winter, 2016), inclusive, at its deepest dimensions, of cognition and emotion (Al-Attas, 1980). Unique pedagogies are used in prompting such transformation, as demonstrated in recent research. For example, Davids and Waghid (2019) invoked the idea of a Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca whereby pedagogy begins in a familiar place, involves journeying to a far place, engaging in a multiplicity of intellectual and spiritual discourses and returning fundamentally changed. While not every pedagogic

pilgrimage is equally transforming for all students, nor do all students participate in the same ways, particular pedagogic activities can yield incalculable transformative results. Such results were described by Canadian Muslim educators in another study (Alkouatli, 2022a) whereby transformative pedagogies included metacognitive practices of triangulated reflection; supplication (dua) with and for learners (Alkouatli, 2022a); and spiritual transference between a learner and a more-conscious other (Alkouatli, 2022b). Sahin (2013) described the primary Islamic text, the Qur'an, as itself a "divine educational intervention programme" (p. 15): a transformative pedagogical hermeneutic approach that propels individuals forward in processes of self-development:

> By using various challenging pedagogic strategies, it prepares us to be self-reflective so that we can engage with a long process of self-transformation. This participatory pedagogy does not simply attempt to inform, but also aims to help us articulate and express our potential (p. 15).

Sahin (2013) contended that the pedagogical strategies within the Qur'an include narratives, dialogues and repetitions that engage the listener, bringing "divinity and humanity in a close dialogue that nurtures human spiritual development" (p. 16). These descriptions echo those of drawing out harmonies of intellect, pure human nature and consciousness (Winter, 2016). The deepening of consciousness – which is, at its deepest levels, consciousness of divinity – is a unique contribution of Islamic education.

A fourth transferable involves developing confidence in one's identity as a minority in effectively contributing to authentic pluralism in Western societies. Researchers have long suggested that providing children with deeper understandings of Islam may strengthen their identities and senses of belonging (Halstead, 2004; Sahin, 2013), which contributes to knowledge translation and confidence in explaining their perspectives to their non-Muslim peers (Cherti and Bradley, 2011) and translates into social consciousness raising and contributing to pluralistic societies as a fundamental aspect of faith practice itself (Alkouatli, 2022b). Integrated identity development is essential if secular liberal democracies are going to actualize their claims of pluralism. For example, Berglund (2019b) provided examples from Sweden and Finland, which, despite some cultural similarities, have taken different approaches to religious education but both contribute to social cohesion. In Sweden, social cohesion is considered best achieved by a "non-confessional religion education that is open to students of all persuasions," whereas in Finland, confessional religious education courses are offered for adherents of the various world religions, including Islam. Both approaches aim to nurture young citizens, cognizant of their multiple identities, who can contribute to society in unique and meaningful ways.

Mainstream-school educators, Muslim educators and learners together, reflecting on the advantages of the differing sites of education as "*agencies* that variously augment and/or deplete a participant's cultural/educational capital" (Berglund, 2019a, p. 20), may optimize Muslim learners' learning experiences across settings. In summary, participation in Islamic education may prepare young Muslim learners to contribute to the societies in which they live by providing opportunities to engage in conceptual diversity, developmental catalyzation and fluency across epistemic horizons. There is much research still to be done toward corroborating the existence, quality and features of these educational transferables and optimizing conditions for their development in sites of Islamic education.

5. Socio-educational implications

In this paper, we set out to illuminate the forefronts of a body of literature that are increasingly being advanced by scholars, educators and practitioners located within Muslim educational communities. Such proponents often must struggle to justify their educational efforts within a marginalized ontoepistemic space and under a critical secular–liberal gaze. As such, the themes

we discerned are discursively constructed within this space that requires us to be constantly reflexive regarding our positionality. It is a delicate balance to both speak in terms that most people will understand, even if they disagree, and still maintain authentic standing within the educational communities our research aims to serve. As we offer novel ideas to the academy, our language is necessarily tentative. We propose that there is intrinsic educational value within Islamic principles and practices; that spiritually centered ways of knowing can complement other ways of knowing toward broader contribution to culturally heterogeneous societies; and that people involved in secular Western dominant educational systems might recognize and support this value. Our analysis suggests that while secular epistemic hegemony is a source of ongoing educational inequities for minoritized Muslim learners, *epistemic heterogeneity* as participation in both secular and spiritual educational contexts can also constitute a significant source of strength. This is a first implication.

A second implication is that the internal diversity of Muslim educational communities of educators, learners, scholars, parents and social leaders supports a dynamic integration of educational processes in service of what we might *become* in building upon our history and envisioning our educational futures. In fostering recognition of diversity within sites of Islamic education, learners must be supported in examining perspectives that range from classical, minority and traditional, as well as alterative, reformative or reimagined; engaging with the "internal and external other," while "examining the self and appreciating the other" (Niyozov and Memon, 2011, p. 26).

The two themes presented in this paper are avenues by which scholars and educators might approach persistent inequities within Muslim learners' educational landscapes. First, by increasing our own awareness of a heterogeneously experienced and expressed Dual Consciousness; second, by supporting young people living within it so that it becomes itself a source of conscious expansion toward perspectival fluency, interparadigmatic interaction and variegated metacognition. Cognizance of Educational Transferables may sensitize educators toward discernment and enable them to work with learners on intentional conceptual integration. Both Muslim educators and their public school colleagues must work together to transform extant inequities into sources of strength, whereby living in two epistemic worlds is a developmental catalyst for young people, rather than a constraint.

Toward this aim, there are many areas for further research. What are the multiple literacies, skills and assets within young Muslim learners' varied educational landscapes; how are they assessed? Must educators themselves be fluent in diversities of epistemologies to guide young Muslims in thinking across difference? What are the intrinsic values of skills and aspects of character development valued within Muslim communities? Are dominant-culture educators and leaders, including those who claim inclusivity and cultural sustainability, prepared to engage in Islamically relevant pedagogy in their classrooms, while, at the same time, working with Muslim students on developing critical reflexivity of their own traditions? Further research is needed on optimizing educational, developmental and ultimately sociocultural benefits of Dual Consciousness and Educational Transferables.

In conclusion, our collaborative review of the literature suggested that Muslim educators, learners and communities, in an age of globalization and superdiversity, continue to struggle for educational self-determination in secular-dominant societies. Muslim learners in heterogenous cultures participate in at least two distinct streams of schooling, each with unique challenges and affordances but of unequal sociocultural–educational–epistemic value. Recognizing the first theme of Dual Consciousness, as the plural ontological realities within which young Muslims live, learn and develop, is important not only because its negative iterations – like enduring racism, Islamophobia and primal fear of the "other" – can inflict profound damage on young people, including in terms of cognitive, social-emotional, spiritual,

ethical and identity development (Bang, 2020), but because the opposite is also possible. In making visible these plural ontological realities, educators can help young Muslims to thrive across them, embracing the positive and developing the resilience to endure the negative. The second theme of Educational Transferables illuminates evidence that Islamic education has contributions to make to its secular counterparts in terms of different and complimentary skills, content, pedagogies and ways of being and becoming human.

Taken together, these two themes shift the educational gaze away from discussions of alienation to those of integration; from deficit to contribution in terms of the foundational educational skills, identities, pedagogies that an Islamic education can offer Muslim learners. These learners are engaging in increasingly high-quality expressions of Islamic education that center complexities of Islamic traditions, the superiority of consciousness over ignorance, love over hate and ways to thrive across ontoepistemic heterogeneity in service of self and social development. There is a growing recognition that Muslim learners and educators have something to contribute to society: something new, something more beautiful (Murad, 2020; The Qur'an, 2008, 41:34, p. 308).

Note

1. Search terms included: "islamic education" OR "islamic school" OR "islamic schooling" OR "islamic schools" OR "muslim education" OR "muslim school" OR "muslim schooling" OR "muslim schools" OR "islamic pedagogy" OR "islamic students" OR "islamic teaching."

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